

May 10, 2023

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-15-23

This All County Information Notice (ACIN) provides County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with clarification regarding the use of allowable shelter deductions and utility allowances for homeless households.



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

May 10, 2023

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE (ACIN) NO. I-15-23

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY
TO KIDS (CALWORKS) PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY REFUGEE PROGRAM COORDINATORS
ALL CONSORTIUM PROJECT MANAGERS
ALL QUALITY CONTROL SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: **CALFRESH SHELTER DEDUCTIONS AND UTILITY
ALLOWANCES FOR HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS**

REFERENCE: [MANUAL OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES \(MPP\) 63-502.35;](#)
[MPP 63-502.362\(a\); MPP 63-502.351; 7 CODE OF FEDERAL](#)
[REGULATIONS \(CFR\) 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(i\); 7 CFR 273.21\(b\)\(1\)\(ii\); 7](#)
[CFR 273.2\(i\)\(1\); 7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(ii\)\(C\); 7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(ii\)\(A\)](#)
[AND \(B\); ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE \(ACIN\) I-78-21;](#)
[ALL COUNTY LETTER \(ACL\) 14-66; ACL 20-48; ACL 19-86;](#)
[WELFARE & INSTITUTIONS CODE SECTION 18901.15](#)

This All County Information Notice (ACIN) provides County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with clarification regarding the use of allowable shelter deductions, and utility allowances for households experiencing homelessness, including households that use vehicles as shelter.

HOMELESS SHELTER DEDUCTION

According to [Title 7 Code Of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(i\)](#) and [Manual Of Policies and Procedures \(MPP\) 63-502.35](#), the homeless shelter deduction is available to households experiencing homelessness who are not receiving free shelter for the entire month. All households experiencing homelessness that incur, or reasonably expect to incur, shelter costs during a month are eligible to the deduction without verifying shelter costs. If the homeless shelter deduction is used, separate utility costs

are not allowed since the homeless shelter deduction already includes a utility cost component.

If actual homeless shelter costs are verified and higher than the homeless shelter deduction, the actual cost may be used as a housing cost instead of a homeless shelter deduction, and utility allowances may be claimed per [MPP 63-502.362\(a\)](#).

Verification is not required to claim the Homeless Shelter Deduction. Per [Welfare & Institutions Code Section 18901.15](#) and [ACL No. 19-86](#), CWDs must accept shelter costs reported by a CalFresh applicant or recipient on a signed initial application, periodic report, or recertification application as sufficient to claim the excess shelter cost deduction, and cannot require additional verification. Verification of separate utility expenses must be obtained in accordance with CalFresh verification requirements as provided in [All County Letter \(ACL\) No. 20-48](#).

VEHICLE COSTS

Per [7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(ii\)\(A\)](#) and [7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(ii\)\(B\)](#), continuing charges for the shelter occupied by the household and insurance on the structure itself are allowable shelter costs. If a household experiencing homelessness is living in any type of vehicle, reasonably anticipated or recurring operational or maintenance expenses including, but not limited to, vehicle payments, and collision and comprehensive insurance premiums paid by the household are allowable shelter costs. The cost of overnight parking and camping fees are also a valid shelter expense. Expenses that occur less frequently than monthly may be averaged over the period for which they are paid. This applies to any costs paid by the household occupying the vehicle, regardless of whether the household owns the vehicle.

The cost of fuel, such as gasoline or diesel fuel, to operate a vehicle is not an allowable shelter cost. The cost of fuel for a vehicle may not be considered a utility expense to qualify the household for utility allowances. Liability and medical insurance premiums are not allowable shelter deductions.

UTILITY ALLOWANCES

Households experiencing homelessness with utility costs, but no shelter costs may claim a utility allowance. CalFresh households may not receive the homeless shelter deduction and a utility allowance at the same time according to [MPP 63-502.351](#).

[7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(ii\)\(C\)](#) lists utilities including “the cost of fuel for heating; cooling (i.e., the operation of air conditioning systems or room air conditioners); (or) electricity or fuel used for purposes other than heating or cooling”. Although the cost of fuel for a vehicle

may not be considered a utility expense to qualify the household for a utility allowance, the cost of gasoline for a generator, propane, or firewood may be considered utility expenses.

The cost of ice, for the purpose of keeping food fresh, is not an allowable deduction under shelter expenses. Ice is considered an eligible food and can be purchased with CalFresh benefits.

Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)

A household that has heating and cooling costs separate from their rent or mortgage is eligible for the SUA.

Limited Utility Allowance (LUA)

A household that does not qualify for the SUA but incurs expenses for at least two separate utilities other than heating and cooling, is eligible for the LUA.

Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA)

A household that is not eligible for the SUA or LUA, but incurs a telephone expense, including cellular telephone service, or an expense for an equivalent form of communication, is eligible for the TUA.

State Utility Assistance Subsidy (SUAS)-Based SUA

A household eligible to receive the Homeless Shelter Deduction shall continue to receive the deduction instead of the SUAS payment (\$20.01) and resulting SUA allowance, as long as the Homeless Shelter Deduction results in the same or higher benefit allotment. If the household does not qualify for SUA and would receive a higher benefit allotment with SUA than with the Homeless Shelter Deduction, the household shall be eligible to the SUAS payment and SUAS-based SUA. More information about SUAS payments may be found in [ACL No. 14-66](#).

If you have any questions or need additional guidance regarding the information in this letter, contact the CalFresh Policy and Employment Bureau at CalFreshPolicy@dss.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

ANDREA BRAYBOY, Chief
CalFresh and Nutrition Branch
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division